



Corridor Program

Congestion Relief & Bus Rapid Transit Projects

APPENDIX Y6

I-405 Construction Communications

I-405, SR520 to SR522 Stage 1 (Kirkland Stage 1)

Request For Proposal
July 15, 2005



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**



Kirkland: I-405 Construction Communications

Crews working for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and Sound Transit will complete two construction projects to improve I-405 in Kirkland in the next few years:

I-405 Totem Lake Freeway Station

Buses, vanpools and carpools traveling between the I-405 high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and the Kingsgate Park and Ride have to merge through four lanes of freeway traffic at the already-crowded NE 124th Street interchange. Sound Transit and WSDOT will build direct access ramps at NE 128th Street in Kirkland to carry HOVs over traffic and directly into HOV lanes. This will provide faster, safer and more reliable service for transit buses and other HOVs and will eliminate the need to weave through freeway traffic.

- provides improved access for buses, carpools and vanpools
- extends NE 128th Street across I-405, provides Kirkland drivers a new east-west route over I-405
- freeway mainline, ramps, carpool lane and city street closures required
- construction July 2005 through winter 2007
- some noise and traffic disruptions expected

Kirkland Nickel Improvement Project

WSDOT will improve I-405 between State Route (SR) 520 and SR 522 by adding one new northbound lane between NE 70th Street to NE 124th Street and one new southbound lane between SR 522 and SR 520.

- reduces congestion through the Kirkland Crawl for traffic on the mainline and HOV lanes
- complements the Sound Transit I-405 Totem Lake Freeway Station Project (see above)
- rebuilds the 116th Street interchange
- freeway mainline, carpool lane and city street overpasses closures expected

Communications objectives

Reinforce the fact that these projects are a smart investment

- Provide information about the benefits these projects will provide to drivers, businesses, the environment, commuters, etc.
- Show that these projects support broader, longer-term plans to improve transportation on I-405 and the Eastside and in the region and state.

Prevent surprises

- Anticipate the unique needs of drivers, commuters, neighbors, policy makers, businesses and others
- Provide relevant, timely information to help them make decisions and weather unavoidable inconveniences

Prove that we are accountable and responsive

- Communicate project information and messages in ways that show we are coordinating and cooperating extensively
- Tell people which agencies are responsible for these projects
- Consider concerns and suggestions from neighbors, drivers and businesses; implement those that are feasible; and close the loop by letting them know how we're responding
- Don't fight public perception that these projects are essentially one
- Minimize disruption whenever feasible, for example, maintain access to nearby businesses and residences whenever possible, avoid disrupting traffic whenever possible, and minimize noise
- Report our progress and budget status frequently and in a straightforward manner
- Respond to inquiries in a timely manner and provide complete, relevant and understandable information
- Encourage people to ride the bus, carpool, vanpool, bicycle, walk, flex their work schedules, work from home, etc. to help keep traffic moving and help people get where they need to go during construction
- WSDOT is putting programs in place to get more people in carpools, vanpools and buses. People who participated in the planning and environmental processes that started these projects requested aggressive efforts to keep traffic moving during construction by supporting transit, carpools, vanpools, flexible work schedules, etc.

Communications strategies

Coordinated communication

The distance between these construction projects is less than 1,000 feet. Coordinated communications will help maintain credibility, accuracy, and consistency; reinforce WSDOT

and Sound Transit's key messages; and make the most of our resources. It also amplifies the power of our communication efforts. Coordinating key messages (project benefits, efforts to minimize construction disturbances for neighbors and drivers, public accountability) reinforce this effort.

We know that the public has no way of discriminating between project lines. The public will see these two projects as one. All materials will include parallel messaging and will utilize WSDOT and/or Sound Transit's agency existing messages, standards, look and feel, and brand. Some unique communications opportunities include:

- Both WSDOT and the City of Kirkland are celebrating 100 years with Centennial events
- Aesthetic treatments on the Totem Lake Freeway Station, Kirkland Nickel, and I-405 Corridor projects

Regular media features

Local and regional news media will be kept informed throughout the Totem Lake Freeway Station and Kirkland Nickel projects. Kirkland has a wide array of media (and related) outlets where residents are used to hearing about community activities and projects, including:

- *Currently Kirkland* local TV show (Janice Perry) – link WSDOT video
- Channel 21 – City Council video
- Kirkland Courier – residents have been particularly vocal about advertising and announcing I-405 improvements in this local newspaper. The paper is free and most Kirkland residents receive it. The Courier is usually looking for articles, and produces a monthly calendar. The front page often features a picture and a major headline story.
- King County Journal – regional newspaper
- Chamber of Commerce Newsletter
- Reader board of events
- City of Kirkland website (includes some streaming video from *Currently Kirkland*)

The press will be notified by phone and through press releases when there are major committee meetings and events. We will maximize the messaging opportunities associated with Kirkland's positive benefit/cost ratio and regional connection. Additionally, we will coordinate press efforts with WSDOT's Urban Corridors Office (UCO) and Northwest Region communications staff.

Personalized outreach to affected groups

In addition to outreach to the media and general public, we'll identify groups that have a particular interest in these projects or are most affected by construction. Together with Sound Transit, we will conduct early, face-to-face outreach to these groups, including meetings with neighborhood associations, retirement homes, Chambers of Commerce, citizen advisory Committees, and other special interest groups and service providers. We'll put ourselves in their shoes and work to provide the information that's most relevant to them in ways that are convenient for them. Some of the strategies suggested by the Kirkland Advisory Committee include:

- Neighborhood association newsletters
- Neighborhood kiosks/bulletin boards
- Church bulletins
- Local college outreach
- School PTA newsletters & weekly packets going home to families

See “Business Outreach Strategy” for Kirkland-area business organizations that we will focus on for targeted outreach as well. These groups will be added to the coordinated projects listserve to receive monthly e-newsletter updates that we will encourage them to put into their own monthly newsletters.

Exceed communications expectations

WSDOT and Sound Transit’s experience developing successful communications strategies for direct access ramps on I-405 in Bellevue and on I-5 at S. 317th St. in Federal Way provide a good model for the current effort. We'll anticipate the need for information and deliver the right information to the right people using the right method at the right time. We'll leverage existing relationships with the community, policymakers and media to conduct effective outreach.

Two types of outreach: early awareness and construction specifics

Both types of outreach include information that reinforces broader WSDOT and Sound Transit messaging.

Early awareness

Some of this work is already underway and will continue through construction. This outreach includes:

- information about both construction projects, including transportation demand management and maintenance of traffic
- personalized outreach
- general information about the project designs and coordination with fewer specifics about construction
- relationship building with audiences who need time to adjust to our construction plans or are directly affected, including neighborhoods, businesses, transit agencies, emergency response providers, etc.
- interactive exchanges; because we're talking with these groups early we'll be able to consider their ideas and suggestions and tap into their networks and expertise, as is occurring with the Kirkland Advisory Committee

Construction specifics

- unified messages—once the I-405 Totem Lake Freeway Station project starts construction the community will simply see construction on I-405 and will most likely see no difference between the projects
- even when each project provides specific details, including construction activities and affects, communications tools can be shared

- provide detailed information about the projects, construction, and construction affects to the public via one source whenever possible; at a minimum consistently mention or link to other projects
- construction information is less interactive and more informational than overall awareness information
- continue to reach both the early awareness audiences and the broader audience, including drivers, who learn about the projects as construction proceeds
- reinforce transportation demand management (TDM) messages by encouraging drivers to ride the bus, carpool, vanpool, work from home, flex their work schedule, bicycle, walk, etc.

Key audiences

- commuters, including weekend commuters
- out of area visitors
- local shoppers and visitors
- downtown Kirkland and Totem Lake businesses
- other cities
- nearby residents
- truck drivers and dispatchers
- elected officials and other policy makers
- transit agencies
- transportation management associations
- employee transportation coordinators
- neighborhood groups
- nearby hospitals and health care organizations
- nearby schools and churches
- WSDOT staff
- Sound Transit Staff
- Kirkland city staff

Key messages

- The Kirkland I-405 projects will deliver faster, safer and more reliable travel for Eastside motorists; particularly those who take buses, carpools and vanpools
- WSDOT, Sound Transit, the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration are delivering these highly coordinated projects
- We are committed to delivering these important Eastside projects on time and within budget
- We are getting in, getting the work done, and getting out as quickly as possible. We'll work nights and weekends and take many other steps to get the work done quickly and minimize disruption

- These important projects fit into overall plans to fix major chokepoints and improve I-405, other state and regional highways, and transit

Supporting messages

Overall project benefits

- This is the kind of project people are calling for: a coordinated effort among agencies that will deliver faster, safer and better commutes
- This is an important regional project that will improve the speed and reliability of transit, carpools and vanpools on the Eastside and address one of the worst congestion chokepoints along the I-405 corridor, the Kirkland Crawl
- The new ramps and lanes will reduce merging and weaving at freeway exits and on ramps, improving traffic flow and safety for all drivers
- These I-405 projects are essential for our economy, jobs and moving freight. I-405 moves nearly 800,000 people a day and carries twice the amount of freight shipped through the Port of Seattle

I-405 Totem Lake Freeway Station specific project benefits

- Will carry buses, carpools and vanpools over traffic and directly into HOV lanes. This will provide faster, safer and more reliable service for transit buses and other HOVs
- Improves safety and reduces congestion by eliminating weaving and merging caused by drivers trying to get in and out of the HOV lane

Kirkland Nickel Project specific project benefits

- Shortens traffic congestion periods in the Kirkland area; improves one of the worst congestion chokepoints along the I-405 corridor, the Kirkland Crawl
- Increases travel speeds during rush hours
- Makes it easier to move freight
- Improves flow through the NW 116th interchange
- Makes it easier and safer to merge from the off-ramps at NW 85th Street
- Improves water quality and helps endangered salmon by treating freeway run-off
- Improves fish passage on Forbes Creek
- Installs five new noise walls and upgrades or relocates four noise walls to help those who are nearest the freeway in the project area
- Improves safety by improving the flow of traffic, signage, pedestrian connections and pavement markings/stripping; even more important because there are several high-accident locations in this project area
- Improves aesthetics using context sensitive solutions design principals
- Project benefits outweigh costs; 11:1 cost/benefit ratio, based upon congestion relief, safety, and right of way (real estate) costs. This project is being built entirely within existing WSDOT right of way

Construction

We are doing our best to minimize the disruption that construction unavoidably causes. We are:

- coordinating all road closures
- consolidating road closures whenever possible
- providing advance information about closures
- coordinating with Washington State Patrol and assuring their presence in the work zone when needed
- coordinating with WSDOT Incident Response Teams and assuring their presence in the work zone when needed
- encouraging people to ride the bus, carpool, flex their work schedules,, etc. to help keep traffic moving and get where they need to go
- putting programs in place to get more people in carpools, vanpools and buses.

Accountable

- We are working to deliver the project on time and within budget and are providing regular and straightforward budget, schedule and construction updates, including closures, noise, etc.
- We are working to maintain community support. We are working closely with local communities and officials to ensure clear communication and access to information. For example, our design team engineers have already been meeting with adjacent businesses and neighborhoods to talk to them about the upcoming construction traffic and noise
- We are meeting or exceeding all technical and quality requirements for design and construction
- We will meet or exceed environmental requirements with no violations

I-405 Business Outreach Strategy Framework- Kirkland Area Improvements

The I-405 Project Team outlined several communications goals in its three Nickel Project public involvement plans. These include:

- Provide information to individuals and entities directly affected by construction in as proactive, responsive and complete manner as possible.
- Reinforce positive WSDOT relationships with partner agencies, individuals and groups.
- Educate the public about the need, vision and context for the Project, as determined by the community process.

Because the I-405 project and its respective Nickel and Implementation projects are of interest to and/or will have an impact on project area businesses, targeted outreach to affected and interested businesses is a high priority. For WSDOT and Sound Transit to achieve their goals of being proactive, responsive, complete, of reinforcing positive relationships with businesses and organizations, and of educating the public, the following framework should be considered when developing strategies for business outreach.

Business outreach goals

- Inform local businesses about local I-405 projects and collaboration with other agency projects when applicable (Sound Transit)
- Inform local businesses of the short- and long-term benefits to them
- Distribute timely notification to businesses about construction-related impacts
- Provide multiple means of enabling and encouraging interactive communication with local businesses
- Change people's transportation behaviors to make better use of rideshare, public transit and other means to reduce traffic congestion

Issues and areas of concern

Construction impacts

Construction impacts for businesses may include noise, dust, road closures, utility interruptions, and blocked access.

Business operations

During construction, many business owners worry that customers will choose to shop or do business elsewhere because of the increased difficulty dealing with traffic, finding their way through detours or confusion about whether businesses are still open. During outreach, the project team will speak with project area business owners to learn what specific concerns and issues exist. The project team will also make it a priority to make sure access to businesses is kept open and clearly marked to minimize loss of business or customer confusion.

Cut-through traffic on local streets

During construction, I-405 travelers will try to find less congested routes north and south. They may choose to drive on local Kirkland streets. Businesses will find this frustrating, as the local streets outside their business will become over congested, thereby limiting their access and drive-by business. An organized TDM approach and clear communications on detour routes are essential.

Transit disruptions for commuters

Thousands of commuters travel the I-405 corridor by bus, vanpool and carpool every day. The project team should make it a priority to coordinate with King County METRO, Sound Transit and carpool coordinators to ensure that employers and commuters are aware of closures, detours and other disruptions that could affect their commute.

Confusion about I-405 Projects

The I-405 Project is complex because of the many coordinated Nickel and Implementation projects, construction phasing, diverse funding and coordination with projects such as Sound Transit's Totem Lake Station in the Kirkland Nickel Project area. It is important that business owners understand the I-405 Project and the schedule of projects that will affect them.

Business stakeholders

Kirkland-area Business Organizations – we will piggyback onto existing organizations’ meetings and give our speakers a “speakers kit,” complete with a combined project fact sheet that will include a map, construction schedule, contacts, and TDM messages. Presentations will focus on what’s important to business owners: what’s going to be closed, timing of closures, changes in access, etc. We will identify upcoming presentations in the I-405 ListServe.

- Totem Lake Action Committee
- Greater Kirkland Chamber of Commerce (Bill Vadino)
- Kirkland Downtown on the Lake
- Kirkland Economic Partnership
- Kirkland Parkplace Merchants Association

Individual businesses to be categorized by small, medium and large. We will work with Don Anderson and Bill Vadino to identify those businesses most impacted. We have a list of over 200 businesses to start from.

- Transportation Coordinators at large businesses
- Kirkland Parkplace
- Evergreen Hospital
- Costco Wholesale Corporation
- Verizon
- Business park owners/property managers
- Auto dealerships

Large companies have commute trip reduction (CTR) coordinators and often engage in TDM. Seek the feedback of employees who manage or coordinate these programs and learn about how your project might affect their efforts, and whether participating employees have any concerns or ideas. Employers with such programs might include Costco, Evergreen Hospital, and others.

Business outreach strategies

In-person one-on-one business owner meetings

Door-to-door outreach allows project managers to meet affected business owners, learn of their concerns, answer questions and develop valuable relationships. Some of this outreach has occurred while the Totem Lake Freeway Station and Kirkland Nickel projects have been in development. Ongoing outreach to businesses will continue, especially into construction.

Mailings and newsletters

The project teams will develop and continually update business addresses and email contacts in the project mailing lists to distribute letters, newsletters or bulletins announcing construction schedules, public meetings or briefings, and other essential project information.

Chambers of commerce

The project teams will present project update information at several of the regularly scheduled membership meetings. In addition, we will coordinate with the Chamber to post regular project updates and public meeting announcements to the Chamber's website or publish brief updates in their regular membership newsletters. This is also a good venue for sharing Context Sensitive Solutions updates.

Team members and affiliations

Bruce Gray, Sound Transit
Hank Howard, Sound Transit
Lee Somerstein, Sound Transit
Doug Haight, WSDOT
Denise Cieri, WSDOT
Melanie Coon, WSDOT
Dave Becher, WSDOT
Colleen Gants, WSDOT/PRR
Scott Guter, WSDOT/PRR
Laura Johnson, WSDOT
Sarah Kavage, WSDOT
Jean Mabry, WSDOT
Todd Merkens, WSDOT/PRR
Brian Nielsen, WSDOT
Stan Suchan, WSDOT
Don Anderson, City of Kirkland

Communications Tools

Tool	Team lead	Due date
Set-Up Processes, Protocols, Tools		
Coordination team logistics	Gants	ongoing
Citizen Correspondence	Gants, Coon, Johnson, Somerstein	follow up mtg
Project Web pages	Johnson, Gants	ongoing
Media outreach	Coon, Gants, Somerstein	as needed
E-mail alerts (list serv)	Johnson	May 05
Groundbreaking and milestone events	Gants, Coon, Johnson, Somerstein	Spring/Summer 05
Open houses	Cieri/Gants/Nielsen	Winter 05
Speakers Bureau	Haight, Becher, Nielsen, Cieri, Coon, Gants	Spring/Summer 05
Specific outreach to business/retail groups	Haight, Becher, Nielsen, Cieri, Coon, Gants	Spring/Summer 05
Project briefing papers	Johnson, Gants	as needed
Direct mail	Coon, Gants, Somerstein	as needed
CSS Communications	Gants, Coon	ongoing
WSDOT intranet, internal e-mail	Johnson, Coon, Gants	as needed
Construction Information Dissemination		
24-hour noise hotline	Haight, Nielsen	ongoing
Policymaker construction notice	Coon, Gants, Somerstein	as needed
WSDOT 511 System	Holter, Posse, Phelps	as needed
Condition Acquisition & Reporting Syst.	Holter, Posse, Phelps	as needed
Variable message signs	Johnson, Gants, Holter	as needed
Highway advisory radio	Johnson, Gants, Holter	as needed
Photographs, Video	Gants, Coon, Holter, Mason	as needed
Project Identification Signs	Cieri, Becher	Spring/Summer 05
Telephone Hotline	S. Bellevue Field Office, D-B Office, Gants, Coon	
Database of construction activities	Johnson, Gants, Holter	ongoing
Construction press releases	Johnson, Gants, Holter	as needed
Weekly construction update	Johnson, Gants, Holter	as needed

Employee transportation coordinators	Kavage, Colehour, Coon, Gants, Gray	Spring 05
TDM Communications	Kavage, Colehour, Coon, Gants, Gray	ongoing
Public Notifications		
Maintenance of Traffic & Access	Coon, Gants	
Traffic Conditions	Coon, Gants	
Emergency Information Dissemination	Holter, Posse, Phelps, City of Kirkland	